

10th Legislative District

BAILEY BULLETIN

A legislative update from Rep. Barbara Bailey



**Representative
Barbara Bailey**

What the Legislature accomplished this session!

- A rainy-day fund proposal goes to voters
- Tax relief for our farmers
- Protections for military families' funerals
- \$9.1 million for local projects
- Ensuring citizens' access to the ballot

P.O. Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600 • bailey.barbara@leg.wa.gov
Phone: (360) 786-7914 • Website: www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/Bailey
Toll-Free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Representative Barbara Bailey • 10th District

June 2007

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

During the 105-day session, recently concluded, the Legislature passed more than 500 pieces of legislation. It was a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly. I worked on behalf of our 10th District citizens for legislation that would:

- increase jobs and grow the economy
- protect the pensions of public employees and retirees
- preserve farmland and property rights
- lower costs of health care options for small employers and their employees
- ensure public safety
- provide funding for important 10th District projects

I also helped to shine the spotlight on abuses and overuse of emergency clauses, and persuaded the majority party to allow voters to consider an emergency rainy day fund.

One major disappointment was when we weren't able to pass a bill that would keep more criminals off the streets and protect families and children. I will continue to fight for safe communities.

This newsletter provides a brief glimpse of major issues. I welcome your thoughts and comments. Please contact my office at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Sincerely,


Rep. Barbara Bailey

I want to hear from you!

Contact me anytime you have questions, comments or ideas. My door is always open to you! This fall, I will be holding "coffee talks" to discuss issues with citizens throughout the district. I'll have more information about this and other activities on my website at: <http://www.houseRepublicans.wa.gov/Bailey>

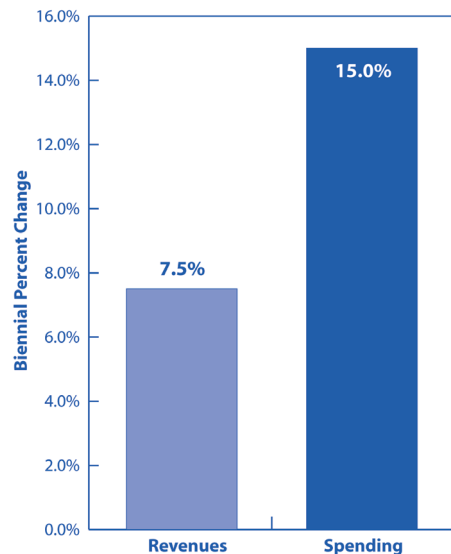
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From a budget surplus to a deficit in two years

We were fortunate to start with a budget surplus of \$2.2 billion this session. I had hoped that the Legislature would have used part of that surplus to pay down the state's unfunded pension liability (estimated at \$5.7 billion). Instead, the majority party spent the entire surplus on new and ongoing programs, spending \$1.3 billion more than the state is expected to take in for revenues.

The operating budget adds more new state employees than the combined populations of Langley, Coupeville and La Conner. I am very concerned that the revenue projections put the state in a \$1.2 billion deficit in two years. Spending is growing twice as fast as revenue. This type of spending is unsustainable and irresponsible.



The operating budget approved by the Legislature spends twice as much as it will take in, creating a large deficit.

Bailey bill closes rehire-retire loophole

This year, the Legislature approved and the governor signed the retire-rehire bill I've prime-sponsored for several years. House Bill 1262 prevents teachers from retiring in name only and then returning to their old jobs while collecting both a paycheck and a retirement check.



Gov. Christine Gregoire signs Rep. Barbara Bailey's bill, closing the retire-rehire loophole.

A 2001 law that was meant to address public employee and teacher shortages, by allowing retirees to come out of retirement on a limited basis to work, inadvertently created a loophole. Within months, hundreds of state employees and teachers had "retired" in name only and then had been rehired, simultaneously collecting their retirement and their employment checks. We closed that loophole in 2003 for state employees, but Gov. Locke at that time vetoed the section involving teacher retirement. My bill finally closes the remaining loophole and restores fairness to the system.

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Local projects funded in capital budget

Several important local projects are funded by the capital construction budget which provides \$9.1 million for the 10th District. These include: \$50,000 for the veterans' memorial at the entrance of the new Wildcats' stadium in Oak Harbor; \$59,000 for Oak Harbor dredging; \$113,000 for a covered play area in Coupeville; \$125,000 for the La Conner Quilt Museum; \$750,000 for farmland preservation at Ebey's Reserve; \$1 million for the Freeland Sewer District; \$2.1 million for the Bay View Park wastewater system; and \$2.2 million for the Ebey Island project.



Affordable health care options missed, health insurance study moves forward

I was encouraged by the report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care and Costs which recommended bold steps to provide affordable access to health care in Washington, including my proposal to offer mandate options for small businesses (House Bill 1539).

Unfortunately, the Legislature approved an expensive measure that promises taxpayer-funded health care to all children and families up to 300 percent of the poverty level (\$62,000 for a family of four). That is higher than the average family income for all but two counties in the state. It is a promise we will not be able to keep.

If we are to address affordability, we need to know what is driving up the costs of health care. I offered House Bill 1538 to order an independent investigation of specific health benefit mandates, rating requirements, and other rules and laws identified as contributing most to the costs of health insurance. This measure was adopted as part of a larger bill.

An emergency? Not really!

Emergency clauses attached to bills allow the legislation to become effective immediately upon the governor's signature. The clause, however, also prevents citizens from challenging the bill through referenda. In the last two years, 447 emergency clauses were attached to bills. Were there really so many emergencies? Or were the emergency clauses added to prevent bills from being challenged?



To prevent this abuse I introduced HJR 4218, which would have required 60 percent approval from the Legislature before an emergency clause could be attached to a bill. When that measure died, I took action directly on the House floor.

I examined every bill with an emergency clause. If the legislation was not an emergency, I offered an amendment to remove the emergency clause. The net effect was that House members had to decide whether or not to keep the emergency clauses. Some lawmakers chose to remove the clauses before their legislation was considered on the House floor. In other cases, the House accepted my amendments to remove the clauses. The governor even vetoed emergency clauses from some bills.

These actions protected our citizens' cherished right of referenda and tried to ensure that the bills containing emergency clauses were indeed for emergencies.

Local teens serve as pages

I was proud to sponsor several outstanding teenagers who served as pages this year in the Legislature. Among those were Cassie Walsh of Stanwood, Benjamin Snow of Langley, and Brooke Blowers, granddaughter of Snohomish County resident Paul Blowers.



Cassie Walsh



Benjamin Snow



Brooke Blowers

Junior high and high school students between the ages of 14 and 16 who are interested in the program can get more information by visiting: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/House/PageInternProgram>.

Persistence pays off

- **Rainy day account** – We convinced the majority party to approve legislation that, with voter approval, will make way for a protected rainy day account. Creation of this fund requires a constitutional amendment, so the proposal will be on the November ballot.
- **Protecting a family's right to grieve** – The first bill to be signed into law during the 2007 session was a measure that restricts demonstrations at funerals. This bill, which I co-sponsored, was necessary because of protests at several funerals for soldiers killed in Iraq. Families should have the right to mourn in peace.
- **Auto theft bill toughens penalties** – At the request of law enforcement, and continued pressure to make communities safer, we finally passed House Bill 1001 which stiffens the penalties for auto theft by juvenile and repeat adult offenders.

Representative Barbara Bailey • 10th District

Tourism bill goes too far

When an opinion by the attorney general put in doubt whether our chambers of commerce could continue using the 2 percent hotel-motel tax for tourism promotion, I sponsored House Bill 1254 this year to allow that practice to continue. Although my bill was supported by our local chambers of commerce, the Legislature decided to approve a much broader measure, Senate Bill 5647, which broadens the ability for these lodging tax dollars to be spent in ways that were never intended. The Senate measure expands the lodging tax to be used for activities, festivals and events that were not designed to bring outside visitors into communities. Although chambers will again be able to use the money for tourism promotion, they unfortunately may have to compete for those finite dollars.

Oak Harbor Wildcats football team honored

One of the best days of the 2007 session was when I had the opportunity to of-



fer a resolution honoring our Class 4A state champion football team – the Oak Harbor Wildcats. The football team and coach Dave Ward were joined by our Wildcat cheerleaders who all came to Olympia to receive the honors. Go Wildcats!

Portions of WASL delayed

If students are to compete successfully in a global economy, we need to maintain high educational standards in our schools and provide kids with the tools necessary to be successful. High failure rates in the math and sciences portion of the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning), however, prompted the Legislature to make some changes. Lawmakers delayed until 2013 a requirement that students pass the math and sciences portions of the WASL to graduate from high school.

Saving gain sharing

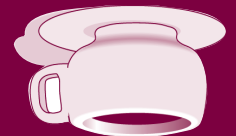
Under a measure I introduced, House Bill 2116, we could have retained an important retirement benefit for state workers known as “gain sharing,” and paid down our unfunded pension liability. This would have saved taxpayers \$4.3 billion over the next 25 years.

Due to the cost of gain sharing, lawmakers sought to eliminate the benefit. My bill would have significantly reduced costs and retained the promised benefits. Unfortunately, the majority party approach was to abolish gain sharing and cost the taxpayers \$5 billion or more over the next few years. This was truly a missed opportunity. We should have kept our promise, lowered our costs, and paid our bills.

Tax relief for farmers

Sometimes it is necessary for a farmer to hire out custom services to another farmer who has specialized equipment. Unfortunately, that triggers the business and occupation (B&O) tax. This is nearly cost-prohibitive to younger farmers who cannot afford specialized equipment. I co-sponsored House Bill 2352 which provides a B&O tax exemption for custom farming services provided by a farmer who produces at least \$10,000 of agricultural products. The measure was signed by the governor.

I also introduced legislation to protect our farmers’ right to farm their land and encourage agricultural activities. Unfortunately, House Bill 2078 did not advance this year. I will keep working this issue.



*Coffee talks
Be watching for
coffee talks in your
town this fall.*

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Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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Barbara Bailey
Representative

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